

OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE MINISTRY OF LIGHT

Peter Hay, prepared for communion word focus, 28 June 2020
Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

Over the last two studies, we have been considering the mystery of seven golden lampstands, and the seven stars in the right hand of Christ.

Today, we will be considering how we participate in the ministry of light as part of the lampstand.

We are looking at the relationship between a lamp and the flowers of a lampstand.

Before we look at this principle of the way in which a lamp is set in a lampstand, so that it shines light on the pathway leading to the fellowship of Yahweh, we will consider some more foundational understandings about churches.

We will look particularly at the distinction between the 'church', which is the body of Christ, and 'denominations'.

The distinction between Christ's church and a denomination

We are not 'taking pot-shots' at any denomination, because we are part of a denomination as well.

However, it is important to understand the distinction between what is Christ's church, which is a body of spiritual people, and what is a 'denomination' - a term that serves a purpose but is actually a definition that is imposed upon a group, or assumed by a group, as a point of distinction.

When we look across the world, it is obvious that there are multitudes of Christian organisations that have resulted from divisions, from splits, and splinter groups, and from all sorts of disagreements.

Often these have been quite spiteful, but one thing that all of these groups have in common is that most of them identify themselves as Christian churches that belong to Christ.

While this diversity, and certainly the animosity that has resulted in the divisions, was not Christ's desire for His church, the diversity, and the breadth of expressions are, nevertheless, symbolised in the book of Revelation by *seven*

golden lampstands. This is the point that we made a couple of sessions ago.

Called to be joined to the fellowship of His body, the church

Throughout the church age, Christ has exhorted the *presbytery*. Remember that this is the group of leaders who are supposed to be in one Spirit, and are ministering according to sanctification, which is their name from the Father, their place in the Son, and their separation by the Holy Spirit.

Remember that Christ is exhorting every presbytery and every Christian congregation to hear what the Spirit is saying, and to be *built as part of the fellowship of His body*, His church.

We know that we are built as part of His church when we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering, or the pathway of Christ's offering and sufferings, through which He was revealed as a lampstand church shining with seven lamps, corresponding to the seven wounding events that He endured.

Christ is calling all believers to *come out from among* these many organisations, and to be separate to Him as sons of God who are joined to the fellowship of His body.

In this regard, Paul explained that the word of the cross is the very means by which Christ sends an angel to see all lawlessness, and everything that offends Him, removed from His church. 2 Co 6:14-18.

His church is a spiritual body among the denominations

The key point for us is to *hear the word of the cross*, which is what the Spirit is saying to us, and to *respond to that word*, as those who are established in the culture of the cross.

On this point of division between the church, which is Christ's body, and which we are being called to join, and the diversity of denominational structures that we are being called to separate ourselves from, it is important for us to recognise the distinction between these two realities.

The distinction is between the *fellowship* of Christ's church, which is the body, and

denominations - recognising that we are part of a denomination ourselves.

However, the denomination *is not the church*.

The first point to note is that His church is *spiritual*.

A denomination, including ours, is an *organisation* that serves a particular purpose.

In other words, Christ's body, the church, is *among the denominations*. The denominations are not the church. Rather, Christ's church, which is His body, is among the denominations.

A denomination is not the church, or the body of Christ

What, then, is a denomination?

A denomination is either a name or designation that has been imposed by a governing authority upon a group who hold a common set of beliefs and practices; or it is a designation that has been assumed by such a group, to distinguish themselves from other groups who have alternative doctrines and practices.

Can you see the point that a denomination is the imposition of a definition, or identification, for the distinction between various different groups? In the first instance, it is actually the imposition of a definition by a governing authority, not by the church itself.

Therefore, how do we (and by 'we' I mean our fellowship of churches) view denominations?

The first point is that we recognise that a *denomination is not the church*; nor is it the *body of Christ*.

No-one is going to heaven on the basis that they are a member of a denomination, including a member of Restoration Fellowships International.

That is, there are no 'RFI-ers' in heaven, just as there will be no people from other 'denominations' in heaven, either.

Jesus was clear that the only way that a person would be in heaven is if they were born as 'a son of God', born of 'the life of God'. He said that they need to be 'born to see the kingdom', and then they need to be 'born of water and of the Spirit to enter the kingdom'.

That is the only way through which a person has a place in the new heavens and earth, which is heaven.

It is not through association with any denominational organisation.

A denomination should be a legal entity that is established for the sake of a church's interface with, or engagement with, the secular community and, in particular, the governing authority of the society within which it meets.

A denomination is not Christ's church. A denomination is an entity, or an organisation, specifically for the purpose of interfacing with the secular community.

The presbytery renders to the authority what belongs to them

Through this entity, the presbytery - who are a spiritual body, and are responsible for feeding those who are in the house of God, and receive the tithes and offerings that belong to the fellowship of offering - renders to the governing authorities what belongs to that authority.

Jesus taught on this principle, and so did Paul. It would be helpful to look at this point. It is recorded in the book of Mark, 'Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words.' Mar 12:13.

We have to be very clear about our understanding of these two bodies - Christ's church and denominations - because the absence of clarity and understanding, or wisdom, on these points is where groups become caught out.

We observe the Pharisees and the Herodians who were coming to catch out Christ on some of these points.

'When they had come they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?"

'But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it." So they brought it.

'And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to

Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at Him.' Mar 12:14-17.

Can you see that, even in Jesus' words here, there is a distinction? Something was being rendered to Caesar, and something else was being rendered to God.

These actions were being done by the same body of people, but there was an understanding of what belongs to Caesar, and what belongs to God.

This is the same understanding that we are to have in relation to His church and the denominations.

All authority is appointed by God

Paul also taught regarding the terms of the interface of the church with the governing authorities in which we operate.

Remember that he was speaking to the Romans who were being severely persecuted by the Roman Empire, so much so that they could not meet publicly - they had to meet discreetly in their houses. Yet, Paul was addressing how they interfaced with the governing authority of the day.

Paul said, 'Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

'Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgement on themselves.

'For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.' Rom 13:1-3.

When he said, 'Do what is good' - and hopefully this is obvious - this did not refer to the 'good' of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

This is the 'good' of the 'good works' that belong to *our sonship in Christ*. That is what Paul is encouraging us to!

'Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an

avenger to execute wrath on him who practises evil.' Rom 13:3-4.

We have a constitution in response to the law of the land

In democratic countries, governments impose constitutions on all 'not for profit' community-based organisations for the purpose of ensuring financial accountability, and so that the conduct of these organisations complies with the laws of the land, particularly in relation to health and safety and child protection.

Can you see the point that it is the government that is imposing these constitutions on all groups, including churches?

These groups, which include churches, sporting organisations and community care organisations, have some liberty within the legal frameworks provided by the government to modify their by-laws to reflect their core business.

What do we mean by this? We mean that all of these groups, in the eyes of the government, are community-based groups, and the government expects them to have a constitution. The government defines the parameters of that constitution, which is the same for every community organisation - be it churches, sporting organisations, community-based care.

So, as a denomination, we have a constitution in response to the law of the land; and our constitution is very similar to the constitution that you would see in a sporting organisation.

However, the way in which our constitution is *communicated*, and the *tone and content* of it, will obviously be consistent with what our core business is; and that is to carry out church events, and to facilitate meeting together in fellowship and the ministry of the word of God. This is not the same content as that of a sporting organisation.

If you read our constitutions, they will have many similarities, but you will see the uniqueness of those constitutions, depending on the core business of the organisations.

Obviously, this sounds technical, and it is, because it is not the *spiritual* body of the church. However, we have to understand how to engage with these government bodies.

Committees are appointed by the presbytery

The government interfaces with the church through committees, which are required by the constitutions that are imposed by the government.

The government requires a constitution for each organisation, and part of that constitutional requirement is committees that are to interface with the government, to assure the government that the organisation is functioning according to the laws of the land.

The important thing to note is that, while committees are *required* by the government, they are *appointed* within our church context by the *presbytery*.

In a church group, the committees are appointed by the presbytery to give account for finances that have been received in the fellowship of offering, and to ensure that our conduct is according to the law in relation to health and safety, buildings and properties, the care of children and, more broadly, all congregants.

Through the entity (still talking about the denomination), which is recognised by the government, we are able to hold properties for the purpose of meeting, and are registered to conduct weddings and funerals. We conduct various types of activities that are within the conditions of this expected community-based activity.

In accordance with the instructions given by Christ and by Paul, we honour and abide by these legal requirements.

The new world order is 'anti-Christ'

However, the church must not, and will not, allow the word of God or the fellowship of the body of Christ, to be subverted by government decree or by constitutional compliance.

So, what do I mean by that?

I mean that when the government requires us to meet some constitutional requirements, these are quite broad.

We have, in our democratic society, a great deal of freedom of religion and of expression.

However, we are coming into a time when a new world order is being established, which is becoming increasingly 'anti-Christ'.

When that happens, the expectations upon organisations such as churches are going to change.

We will find that the government will increasingly impose on our organisation (the denomination) the expectation that it will be recognised by the government only if it complies with some conditions to do with what we preach and teach, and how we meet together.

This is why it is important that we understand the distinction between the denomination and His church, which is the body of Christ.

Clearly, we will not, and we must not, compromise on the reality that we are those who *live by every word that is being proclaimed by Christ through the Spirit*.

Our conduct as a fellowship belongs to *Christ*; it doesn't belong to the denomination.

This means that we must become comfortable with the reality that, in the future, as the world does become increasingly anti-Christ, this will set us at odds with the government, and will bring us under persecution.

Every world kingdom has persecuted the church

When we look across the other six world kingdoms that have previously been established, we note that His church, which the Scriptures refer to as 'the firstborn nation', has been persecuted on this point in every world kingdom.

Perhaps the most acute example of this is seen in the kingdom of Babylon where we note the example of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. These were heroes of faith who, while they honoured the authority of the day by showing themselves trustworthy, wise and valued by the governing authority, would not compromise, particularly in relation to idols.

We know, and we have been teaching over these past number of weeks, that idolatry, particularly in the church, has to do with *worthless doctrines*, and that is where we will find the greatest persecution.

There will be the imposition, or the over-reach, of the government toward a church group to say that they will acknowledge them as a church if they will comply with some doctrinal standards.

That is where the conflict will be, because *we don't live by a doctrine*.

The people of His church live by His living and proceeding word

Rather, we *live by a living and proceeding word* that is coming down from heaven, by the Spirit, through messengers who are in the right hand of Christ.

In time, we will have to accept that this will be the point of distinction, and we will have to give an account for our faith.

We need to be clear about the distinction between the denomination and what it means to be Christ's church and to live by that word of the cross which is bringing this separation.

The fellowship of presbytery is the fellowship of the church

Having explained what the denomination is and what His church is, we should be able to see that the constitution of a denomination is a *servant* to the fellowship of the presbytery, which is the fellowship of the church group.

The fellowship of the *presbytery* is the fellowship of that *church*.

In this regard, the apostle John said, 'That which we have heard, which we have seen, which we have looked upon and handled [referring to a presbytery fellowship] ... we declare [that word] to you also, that you might have fellowship with us.' 1Jn 1:1,3.

He was saying that the fellowship of the *presbytery* should also be the fellowship of a *church*.

The committee is a servant, not a ruler

These committees, which are the bodies, or entities, of the denomination, which communicate, or interface, with the government, are to be a *servant* to the presbytery.

It is a great corruption - and we will read a passage where King Solomon said that this is a great evil - where those committees, or a core business of a denominational committee, becomes the 'ruler of a church'.

Can you see that when that happens, the committee then begins to dictate how that church should function and the nature of its fellowship; and that is where we see corruption happening.

That would be a servant (remembering that the committee is to be a servant to the presbytery) ruling over the authority that Christ, Himself, has set over His house.

King Solomon described this as being a great evil under the sun. 'There is an evil I have seen under the sun, as an error proceeding from the ruler.' Ecc 10:5.

These rulers can be likened to the stewards, or the slaves, that Christ, the Master, has set over His house.

King Solomon meant that those who have been given over-seership of a church, because they are part of a lamp presbytery, are in error when they allow some of the things that he listed, to happen.

Corruption – church rulership based on fleshly understanding

'Folly [or foolishness] is set in great dignity, while the rich sit in a lowly place.' Ecc 10:6.

He was saying that there are 'foolish' people who are in positions of authority, or power, in the churches.

When we refer to 'folly', we are not just meaning people who are 'silly'.

When it is recorded in the Scriptures regarding the 'fool', it describes a person who is *operating from the basis of their own understanding*. The fool believes that their own way is right.

Sometimes, the most foolish can come across as being the most skilful or the most able to engage in the community of the world.

King Solomon was saying that when this becomes the mode of rulership in a church - where those who are *rich* (the ones who have received gifted and graced capacity from Christ) sit in lowly places, as in they are not the ones who are laying down the word, as they should be - then this is 'an evil'.

'I have seen *servants* on horses [these servants would be the committees, if you like, as the ones who are on the 'heights', going around dictating the course of action of a church] while *princes* [who should be the authority in a church group] walk on the ground like servants.' Ecc 10:7.

Hearing what the Spirit is saying to the churches

King Solomon said that this is a great evil, which is why we need to understand the distinction between denominations, and the nature of the spiritual body, the church, which is the fellowship of the presbytery.

In this spiritual body of people, we are giving ear to what the Spirit is saying, and we are walking in a way that is separating ourselves from practices that are lawless.

Servants whom Christ has appointed over His house 'beat their fellow servants', and 'eat and drink with drunkards', when they prioritise the doctrines and practices that mark their denominations, above a *fellowship initiative* toward *hearing and ministering what the Spirit is saying to the churches*.

I will say this again, because it is an extremely important point. Servants whom Christ has appointed over His house 'beat their fellow servants' – meaning that they demand their compliance with a particular point of view.

They beat their fellow servants and 'eat and drink with drunkards'. This means eating and drinking with people whose *perspective is deluded*.

Can you see that means that they are walking in darkness? To 'eat and drink with drunkards' occurs when they prioritise what makes them a denomination; that is, the doctrine and practices that are unique to their denomination.

When those who have been appointed over the house of Christ prioritise the things that mark their distinction, over and against a fellowship initiative toward hearing and ministering what the Spirit is saying to the churches, they are beating, and are not feeding, the people in the house of God.

First love is being in one Spirit with the Lord and each other

Those in the house do not 'receive their food in due season'.

The light of the lamp will be dim indeed.

Its *love* will grow cold. This is the love within that presbytery and, indeed, within that church body, that will grow cold because it is not based in first love.

'First love' is the love that we have because we are one Spirit with the Lord, and with one another.

And when we are one Spirit with the Lord we, by one Spirit, have connection to the Father.

This is not simply a position – it's *not even* a position!

Our connection to the Father is our connection to His *word*. And that word is to be 'bread from heaven' to feed each person in due season, so that we are doing the will of God as members of the body of Christ.

Remember that the Scriptures refer to this love as 'a vehement flame that waters cannot quench'. If it is not that love, it is growing cold because it is unsustainable.

A group of Christian believers are not a church on the basis that they are a denomination. So, why are they a church? Believers are of the true church because they are committed to receiving and walking in the light of the word of God that is ministered by Christ through the Spirit.

Desiring to have fellowship with one another

It is evident that we walk in this way because we desire to have fellowship with one another.

Can you see that we are not part of His church because we identify ourselves with a particular doctrine or a particular set of practices or a particular history, or with anything similar.

It is not even the case of our seeing corruption elsewhere, and considering that we are a church on the basis that we are not like *that*!

For a person who is connected to the church belonging to Christ, it is evident this is the case, because they will desire *fellowship* with other believers who are also born of God.

They are able to meet in the Spirit with one another.

The distinction between a denomination and a church is most evident when the structures or defining features of the denomination are removed.

We have just spoken about the denomination being those practices which mark, or delineate, an organisation in the eyes of the government or in the eyes of others. This is specifically related to finances, to the holding of property, and to certain

practices which are to be registered with the government.

When these things are removed, it is evident that we are a church, and not simply a denomination, because of our *fellowship* with one another.

The mark of being joined to the church

If, for example, our buildings or the right or capacity to meet together, are taken away; if there is no fellowship or commitment to fellowship, it is evident that we have been joined only by our belonging to a denomination.

In this situation, the reality of the church will be seen in the commitment to a communion fellowship from house to house. It is not only that there is commitment to this fellowship; this reality will also continue to flourish and grow.

Part of the rejoicing of this current season for me is that, while there has been repentance, and an understanding of what the Lord is addressing in us and calling us to turn to, it has been simply wonderful to see the *access* of the word of God, which is the light of present truth, into every family, and the desire of every family to invite that fellowship into their house.

This is the mark of being joined to the church!

Love birthed in us compels us to fellowship

Our association together is not because we are 'denominated' by the government; it is because we *love one another*.

This is the capacity that is *birthed* in us and, when it is birthed in us, we can do nothing but be compelled to have fellowship with one another.

This is an overflow resulting from our connection to the communion table.

Access to the tree of life

As we are repenting from all these other structures and understandings, which are worthless doctrines, what is He granting to us? He is granting to us access to the tree of life.

This is our communion fellowship, which is our connection to the body of Christ.

In this regard, Jesus said, 'If you eat and drink My body and My blood, I will abide in you and you will abide in Me.'

The fellowship of light

Let's look at the spiritual body, the church, and the way in which the lamp interfaces with the lampstand so that a lampstand is effectively shining light.

The first thing to note is that the lampstand within the holy place was a symbol of *the fellowship of light*, so the letters of John highlight this reality.

John explained the nature of a lamp presbytery. He said that the word is communicated to us so that we might 'have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father and the Son.' Then he said, 'Those who receive this word walk in the light of it and have fellowship with one another.'

We cannot have light without fellowship, or fellowship without light.

Paul used the symbol of a lamp set upon a lampstand to portray the apostolic ministry in which he and his fellow presbyters were engaged.

He testified. 'For so the Lord has commanded us, "I have set you as a light to the Gentiles that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth".' Act 13:47.

'Set as a light' is a notable phrase. It is not simply that He propelled Paul out into the community.

To be 'set as a light' is actually to be *set in a place* that is able to shine the light.

Paul was specifically referring to or using the language of a lampstand here, because the lamp is to be set in the receptacle of a flower which belongs to a lampstand.

And Paul said that when this happens, it shines the light of salvation to the whole world.

When a lamp presbytery is set within the flower of the lampstand, light shines *in* the fellowship of a church, and then *from* the church. We therefore need to understand what constitutes a *flower*

Quite simply, a *flower* on the lampstand refers to a church *congregation*.

Each *petal* of a flower symbolises or represents every *member* of that congregation in which the lamp is being set.

The lamp is a 'star' which belongs to Christ's hand. And it is being set - that lamp-light is set - in a congregation.

The petals of that flower which symbolises the congregation, are all the individual members of that church gathering.

The symbology of one presbytery for one lampstand

It is important to make this symbology clear.

One star is one angel of seven lamps.

The angel is the *aggelos*, or presbytery, for the whole lampstand.

Seven lamps do not denote seven presbyteries. Rather, one star is the 'angel' presbytery for one lampstand. And that one presbytery is symbolised, or described, as seven lights for a lampstand.

Seven lamps is one presbytery for a lampstand that has multiple congregation flowers.

In the imagery of the lampstand, there are obviously seven flowers on the top of the lampstand, but there are actually twenty-two flowers altogether.

Each of those flowers represents a congregation, and, in reality, the lamp could be set in any of those flowers. The point is not necessarily the *number* of flowers or lamps but, rather, that *seven* lamps represent the *fullness of lamp-light*.

Those seven lamps are actually one presbytery for that whole lampstand church, and for all of the congregations which belong to that lampstand.

In this, we see that there is only one star, one *aggelos*, one presbytery, for all of the congregations, in order to provide light for all of the congregations of the church.

And that one *aggelos* presbytery is described as 'seven lamps', which refers to the *fullness* of lamp-light for the lampstand.

Therefore, the light for one local congregation, for example Brisbane, should be the same light for other local congregations, such as Sydney or Melbourne. We are all part of the one lampstand. There are different areas, different cities; but there is only one *aggelos*, or star, for all of those cities.

The light for each congregation comes from one presbytery

This means that the light for one local congregation, Brisbane, should be the same light

for other local congregations who are part of the lampstand. And how is this so?

Is it because we all teach from the same book? Obviously, the same *book* should be the Bible. But we do have notes and books that are part of our fellowship discussion.

What, therefore, is the oneness? It is not the fact that we are saying the same things.

Rather, the reason why the light in each local congregation will be the same is because it is coming from one presbytery, which is the star of the lampstand.

It is the same light because those who are part of the presbytery in that area - presbyters who are in Brisbane, presbyters who are in Melbourne and presbyters who are in Sydney - are not the presbytery that belong to that city alone. Rather, they are part of the one presbytery for the whole lampstand.

It is the same light because those who are part of the presbytery in that area are, *first*, one Spirit together.

When John saw the seven lamps burning brightly in the throne picture in Revelation Chapter 4, what did he say the seven lamps were? Did he say that they were seven presbyteries?

No! They were *the seven Spirits of God*. This is the one Spirit of God being communicated to the whole earth.

The light in all these different areas is because it is one lamp presbytery, or one angel [*aggelos*], who are all in *one Spirit*.

The next key point is that the believers in those areas who are in one Spirit with the presbytery do not first 'belong' to those areas.

They *belong* primarily to Christ's hand.

Do you see the point that a local church mindset would maintain that a certain group of leaders who have grown up among us should be the ones who bring the light of the word to us?

There may be a situation where those leaders in that church, for example in Alice Springs, obtain resources from other places and conduct their meetings on the basis of resources.

That is not being of *one Spirit*.

The reality is that, when Christ sets a person apart for the work of feeding the church, in due season He takes them and places them in a lamp fellowship; and that lamp fellowship is a star that belongs *first* to the hand. It doesn't first belong to the congregation.

A local church cannot be independent

Every person, of course, needs to be part of a lampstand church. It is simply a reality that a local church cannot be independent. If it is independent, then the light shining in that place is not the light that is shining *from the one lamp presbytery*.

The congregations in a restored lampstand are not to be independent. Neither is there light shining from their own local church.

It is not that Brisbane or Melbourne or Sydney or any other city has its *own* presbytery that generates its *own* light.

Rather, there is an *aggelos* who are in one Spirit - or there should be an *aggelos* that is in one Spirit.

Where this is so, there is *light* that is the fellowship of the word which is to be proclaimed in every place by those who are part of that fellowship.

It is bringing the *fellowship of one Spirit* that belongs to the lamp, to every congregation flower.

A lamp can't shine light without the petals

When lamps are set in congregation flowers, that fellowship is being set within that flower. That *fellowship* of one Spirit, which is a fellowship in the word from the beginning, is set in that flower as a *light*.

When this happens, the lamp is actually hidden within the flower, so there is no distinction between the flower and lamp. All that is seen is a light shining among petals.

The importance of this reality is that the lamp can't shine light without the petals, and the petals have no light to shine unless there is a lamp in the midst.

Neither functions without the other because, in the end, they are to be one fellowship together. Do you see the point that the church is a fellowship, and the most acute definition of that fellowship is this one-Spirit fellowship of a lamp in the context of a communion congregation.

When that light is placed in the receptacle of a flower, and the light of the lamp shines on the petal, it is not that the light is inherent to the petal. Rather, it is that the light from the fellowship shines on a petal, and that petal, because of its unique shape, then shines that light in a particular way.

The ministry of the saints

We are all supposed to be shining lights. This is what Paul was saying when he referred to the gifts and graces that belong to Christ. He said, 'They are given for the work of the ministry of the saints.'

This is what the work of the ministry of the saints looks like - *it is the shining of this lamplight*.

The light of the presbytery shines on the petals of the flower of the golden lampstand, which has been formed to reflect and focus the light in the front of the lampstand in the manner of a mirror.

We spoke about this two weeks ago when making reference to the efficacy of a lens.

The light that each person ministers through body ministry is the light of the gospel of sonship that shines from the face of Christ into the hearts of the hearers.

Here is an important point. Through this ministry, the sons of God are receiving the light of the knowledge of *their* sonship from the face of Christ.

Remember that the light is first one Spirit, and is then the fellowship of the word which, John said, is the word from the beginning. This is the word of the Father which contains in it the word that belongs to the name of every son of God.

When that light, or that fellowship in the word, is set in the fellowship of the congregation, the light that is shining is the light pertaining to everyone's name as a son of God.

They are looking into the face of Christ as it shines like a mirror, and are receiving the knowledge of the glory of God, which is the knowledge of their sonship, into their hearts.

Every person is to do that. It is not that only some are called to be lights (those who shine the light). Every one of us is to shine the light as we participate in body ministry; and we are all to receive that ministry from one another.

This is called the fellowship of giving and receiving!

This is how the life of God is multiplied

Grace is being *multiplied* through variegated light.

Those who are part of the lamp have to receive the light the same manner.

In the case of a person whom the Lord has set to proclaim the word, as they are hearing the word from another, they are not to become the judge of it. They are to receive it as well; otherwise, they are not understanding the true nature of the ministry of the word of God, as He has intended.

In short, we are all called to be both *givers* and *receivers* of the word.

This is an amazing thought. This is grace coming to the humble! All of us need to receive the light in this way.

I have made the point that every son of God, including those who are part of the presbytery, must receive this ministry if they are to know God and to be known by Him as a son.

In this regard, it is important to note that those who are part of a lamp presbytery are first, and also, part of the lampstand flowers.

When they participate in body ministry, they are doing so as petals of the flower, even though they are part of the fellowship that has brought the light to the lamp.

Can you see that when a person proclaims the word, they are not the lamp-light; rather, they are now the expression of that light as a mirror.

Those who are part of the lamp presbytery need to understand this distinction. They are both part of the fellowship of the word.

Those who are hearing, seeing, looking upon and handling the word need to be those who are petals, like everyone in the church, reflecting that light according to their own name and sanctification; revealing another.

And they also have to be *receiving* that light as it is being shone.

Every one of us needs to understand these distinctions and to participate according to our unique name and the way in which the Father has placed us in the body.

This is the love of God

Paul addressed this principle of the body ministry in his letter to the Corinthians, and he did so in the context of the necessity for love to be the foundation of our fellowship.

This is the love of God that is demonstrated by laying life down to reveal another.

‘For we know in part and we prophesy in part.’
1Co 13:9.

This refers to the way or the brightness of the light.

The lamp is placed in the flower and it has to shine light. It is shining the light of the knowledge of the glory of God into our heart.

But Paul said that that ministry (he used the example of the ministry of prophecy) is only in part. And we are only *knowing* in part, so we are not getting the full light.

Growing up as sons of God

Then he picked up this point on the mirror, ‘for now we see in a mirror dimly’, meaning that the light that is shining from the mirror of petals is only a dim light at this point. ‘Then face to face, now I know in part’. So, I don’t know the full extent of my name, ‘but then I shall know just as I also am known’. 1Co 13:12.

This is the same point that John made when he said, ‘I am already a son of God but it doesn’t yet appear what I will be like, but when I see Him [when I know in full] I will be just like Him.’

Paul explained that the light that shines through body ministry is dim, yet it does minister the light that is necessary for the progressive attainment of a hearer’s sonship.

The point to note here is that we don’t make a judgement about whether the light is shining brightly or not, or sufficiently. Nor do we give heed to the light because we think that it has reached a level that is worth giving our attention to.

If we are part of a lampstand church, and are believing to be separated from lawlessness, then we know that the light that is shining, as dim as it may be, is adequate for our *growth and development as a son of God*.

This is between the point on knowing in part, and the point of seeing dimly in a mirror.

In this regard, Paul said, 'When I was a child I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things.' 2Co 13:11-12.

He was saying that *all* of us are to speak and to participate in body ministry.

Now, body ministry does not occur only in a church service. Body ministry is the expression of the body in *every context of our life*, including in our families.

He explained that we begin by speaking and participating like a child.

Then he noted that we are to grow up and mature, and that, as we do so, the light becomes less dim.

It is dim because of our childishness which, in other letters, he described as 'carnality'.

His church being restored and refined

The reason why it becomes less dim is because, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, we are putting off our carnality and are growing up as sons of God.

The light is dim because we, as *petals* who belong to a church congregation, are still in a process of refinement.

Furthermore, the *angels* of the church (the lamp-light) are in a process of being *restored* to Christ's hand.

These ones have fallen from His hand. If someone has been appointed to minister the word of God, but are not in His hand – that is, in the fellowship of one Spirit – then they are not shining light, are they?

This is so even if that is their sanctification! Remember how we used the example of Paul.

The point is that all *petals* are being refined so that, as they become refined by fire, they shine even more brightly.

But there are also *lamps* who are being restored in the fellowship of first love, which is a vehement flame that is shining brighter as they are being restored to first love.

Both elements are required for the light to be less dim.

The fiery furnace delivers and matures us

The divine nature that belongs to us as sons of God is symbolised in the Scriptures as *gold, silver and precious stones*.

In relation to the ministry of a lampstand and the petals that belong to its flowers, gold is refined in a furnace to remove its impurities that subdue its brightness and its capacity to reflect the light.

Do you see the point that, in the fiery furnace – in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings – there is a purifying effect that is not only delivering us from our own carnality, but also is causing us to mature in our ability to reflect the light according to our name?

This is the brightness of the gold that is being refined as fire. It is also notable that, through fellowship in the church, Christ Himself is adjusting the petals.

It is amazing that it is not simply that the gold in us is being refined but, also, that He is shaping us by His hand so that we are more effective in our ministry of the light of life.

Through fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, which the Scriptures refer to as 'a fiery trial' or 'fiery trials', we are increasingly made adequate for our participation in this ministry.